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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAO](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: YEMENI OFFICIALS USE MEDIA TO SEND MESSAGE OF "NO
BOOTS ON THE GROUND"

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) SUMMARY: Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Affairs, Rashad Al-Alimi, held a press conference in Sanaa on January 7, ostensibly to address all of Yemen's security issues, although Alimi used the occasion to send a clear signal through the international media that Yemen would not tolerate "U.S. boots on the ground." The evening before, Foreign Minister al-Qirbi told CNN's Christiane Amanpour that "fighting the Al-Qaeda militants is the priority and responsibility of Yemen's security forces and the army," adding that Yemen would not accept U.S. military intervention because "I think that the U.S. has learned from Afghanistan and Iraq and other places that direct intervention can be self-defeating." Echoing this theme, media outlets in Yemen cherry-picked quotes from remarks delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Naval War College, in response to a query about whether the U.S. would send forces in Yemen that "The answer is that we have no plans to do that, and we shouldn't forget this is a sovereign country." END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Affairs, Rashad Al-Alimi, held a press conference in Sanaa on January 7, attended by local media in addition to the cadre of international correspondents currently in Yemen. Minister of Information Al-Lowzi quickly ceded the floor to Alimi, who addressed a host of security topics. Alimi stated that "Yemen rejects any presence of foreign troops on its lands..." and reiterated that "Yemen's cooperation with the international community is limited to training, technical support, and information exchange." Alimi warmed to his topic in a long and detailed description of Yemen's efforts to combat terrorism, stating that the security situation in Yemen is under control because "security services are able to confront challenges, eradicate all terrorist groups and refer those outlaw elements to face justice." He said that Yemen's counterterrorism strategy involves signing CT agreements with several countries, engaging in a "dialogue approach" with "misguided elements" and launching awareness campaigns on the dangers of extremism and terrorism.

13. (SBU) In a wide-ranging discussion of Yemen's security issues, Alimi asserted that "Yemen needs support for its development process and counterterrorism plans so as not to reach a state of failure." Regarding the Northwest Airline "underwear bomber," Nigerian Omar Abdulmutallab, Alimi said he may have met with Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen, as well as AQAP operative, Mohammad Omair, who was killed in the December 24 air raid in Wadi Rafadh in Shabwah. Alimi, however, stunned the international audience with claims that Abdulmutallab had been supplied with the explosive material in Nigeria, not Yemen.

14. (SBU) Local and international media text-messaged Foreign Minister al-Qirbi's assertion during his January 6 CNN interview that "fighting the Al-Qaeda militants is the priority and responsibility of Yemen's security forces and

the army," telling Christiane Amanpour that Yemen would not accept U.S. military intervention because "I think that the U.S. has learned from Afghanistan and Iraq and other places that direct intervention can be self-defeating." Media outlets in Yemen on January 8 picked up the speech by Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, delivered at the Naval War College, and quoted his response to a query about sending U.S. forces in Yemen: "The answer is that we have no plans to do that, and we shouldn't forget this is a sovereign country."

15. (C) COMMENT: Alimi's message of "no U.S. boots on the ground in Yemen" is consistent with the message that the ROYG has been confirming in public statements over the past two weeks, that Yemen is serious about fighting al-Qaeda, and capable of doing so with limited support from Washington. To the extent that our public statements continue to reflect a sensitivity to the "amour-propre" of Yemen's leadership on this subject, we can expect the Yemeni government to continue to publicly affirm its seriousness about prosecuting its counterterrorism objectives and perhaps to match these expressions of intent with actions on the ground. END COMMENT.
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